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Iraq: Procedures in place since March 2003 to obtain and to renew a passport from within the country; validity and status of pre-2003 passports
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

According to government and media sources, Iraqi passports are categorized as either "G," "S," "M," "N" or "H" series (Iraq 8 Nov. 2006; *Asharq Alawsat* 27 Sept. 2006; CPA 4 June 2004). Keesing Reference System's Document Checker also identifies a "K" series passport which they claim is no longer valid (31 Oct. 2006). No further information could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate regarding "K" series passports. According to an Iraqi consular official in the United States, "G" and "S" series passports are currently being issued in Iraq (8 Nov. 2006). Iraq began issuing the "G" series passport, which is machine-readable and more secure than older versions, on 11 April 2006 (UK n.d.; Iraq n.d.). The "S" series passport was first issued after former President Saddam Hussein was deposed and then during the rule of subsequent Iraqi governments (*Asharq Alawsat* 27 Sept. 2006; Iraq 8 Nov. 2006). A consular official at the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq to the United States stated that "S" series passports can be extended but did not specify the period of extension (ibid.). According to the British Embassy in Stockholm, Iraqi citizens entering the United Kingdom on or after 1 November 2006 must hold a "G" series passport in order to be admitted into the country (N.d.).

The "M," "N" and "H" series passports were issued while Saddam Hussein was in power (ibid.; *Asharq Alawsat* 27 Sept. 2006). According to an Iraqi consular official in the United States, "M" series passports were issued beginning in 1988, "N" series passports were issued between 1997 and 2002, and "H" series passports from 2002 until March 2003 (8 Nov. 2006). "M" series passports can currently be extended for two years and "N" series passports can be extended for four years (ibid.). In contrast to the information provided above, Keesing Reference System's Document Checker states that "M" and "N" series passports are no longer valid (31 Oct. 2006).

In order to obtain or renew a passport in Iraq, an individual must go to a "designated travel document issuing authority" which includes "the offices of the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs so designated by the Minister or Deputy Minister of Interior" (CPA 4 June 2004, 2). In a telephone interview on 6 November 2006, a consular official from the Embassy of Iraq to Canada stated that an individual must show original copies of his or her Iraqi citizenship certificate and birth certificate to obtain or renew a passport. According to *The Charlotte Observer*, one of 32 daily newspapers belonging to The McClatchy

Company in the United States, there is a charge of approximately USD 28 to obtain a passport (1 Sept. 2006). No corroborating information could be found regarding the fee to obtain a passport in Iraq among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, a consular official from the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq to the United States noted that the fee to obtain an Iraqi passport from the embassy in the United States is USD 20 for a new passport and USD 25 to renew one (8 Nov. 2006).

A September 2006 article in *The Charlotte Observer* documents a pressing demand for Iraqi passports and a significant backlog of applications (1 Sept. 2006). The article describes Iraqi citizens violating curfew in order to line up at passport offices as early as 5:00 a.m. (ibid.). *The Charlotte Observer* also reports that passport office lines number in the hundreds of people (ibid.). In order to expedite the application process, some Iraqi citizens have hired mediators for an additional fee (ibid.). Mediators pay passport officials extra sums of money to accelerate the issuance of their customers' passports (ibid.). It is reported that many of these customers have sold all their possessions to cover the cost of the mediator and their travel arrangements (ibid.). No corroborating information could be found regarding the demand for passports among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Asharq Alawsat [London]. 27 September 2006. Ma'ad Fayad. "Large Number of Post-Saddam Iraqi Passports Forged and Stolen." <<http://aawsat.com/english/print.asp?artid=id6525>> [Accessed 9 Nov. 2006]

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Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). 4 June 2004. *Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 16 (Revised) (Amended): Temporary Control of Iraqi Borders, Ports and Airports*. <http://www.cpa-iraq.org/regulations/20040613_CPAORD_16_Temporary_Control_of_Iraqi_Borders__Ports__Airports__Rev__Amd_.pdf> [Accessed 9 Nov. 2006]

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Keesing Reference System. 31 October 2006. Document Checker. "Iraq - National Passports." <<http://www.documentchecker.com/rdo.dll/id>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006]

United Kingdom (UK). N.d. British Embassy in Stockholm. "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About Iraqi Passports." <<http://www.britishembassy.se/visa/iraqqa.php>> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2006]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Stockholm, Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iraq Ministry of Interior (Web site under construction), President of Iraq, Prime Minister of Iraq, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) REFWORLD, United States Department of State Visa Reciprocity and Country Documents Finder.

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